Research Proposal of Ph.D. Thesis

The Significance of Reading Skills in Developing Writing Skills of Arabic Speaking Students

Submitted to

Symbiosis International University

For the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in English

by

Jaya Sidhanta

Under the guidance of

Dr. Z.N. Patil

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Symbiosis International University

Pune- 411004

May 9, 2011

Introduction

“Each man who knows how to read has in him the power to magnify to multiply the ways in which he exists to make his life fully significant and interesting.”(Aldus Huxley)

Education opens the influx of knowledge which starts from the day we first go to school and goes on till death. Education has now expanded its boundaries even to the remotest area of a country. Tremendous increase has taken place in quality education. Various kinds of education like open school education, multipurpose education, vocational training can for fulfill the demands of people knowledge is now within the reach of any person who is in pursuit of it. Education has changed the face of the society. Among every person we can find at least one who is educated. Well educated are the ones who form the cream of society. We can see an increase in their number also.

Women’s education is another area which attracts our attention. Education and, knowledge have been including this part of the society. But now with the increasing awareness among people, education, even the higher education has come within the reach of women. If not in the reach of every woman to be very precise, at least part of the society is giving training and education to the fairer sex.

JUSTIFICATION

Before I justify my proposal I would like to share my own experience as a non native speaker of English language which is largely responsible for taking up this topic. Being a student of regional language, English had always been a difficult subject for me. But the urge to master it was so strong that I started self study by reading simple but interesting books. I remember that *The Broken Arrow* was the first English novel which I read. I used to sit with this book normally after 10 pm, after I had finished by regular study. I used to spend hours with it. Naturally, I found many difficult words while reading the novel. I made a diary of vocabulary. Dictionary was my best friend. When I finished reading, a sense of satisfaction came into my mind and started craving for more. My love for English literature grew so intense that I took up English as a special subject so that I could read variety of books. My habit of reading text books helped me to beat the other students mostly from convert background. In fact this habit gave me success in the post-graduation level also. I became the favorite student of all the professors because of my prompt reply in the class, thanks to my habit of reading text books well in advance. In fact whatever I'm today, I owe this to my habit of extensive reading.

I want to create this awareness in the non-native learners of the English language. At every level, I have come across many students, relying on readymade notes, rather than studying text books. The result sometimes was catastrophic. The importance of English language cannot be overemphasized. With the globalization of English language it has become at the more important to have a sound knowledge of this

language. Needless to say everything cannot be taught. The learner has to put at least some effort to learn this language.

My hypothesis is that reading is a skill which, if used tactfully, can help in developing other language skills like writing listening and speaking. In English a great variety of books are available. Careful selection can really help in developing other language skills. And reading is a habit which can be carried out at any time at any place. My aim behind this research is to create awareness among the non-native teachers and learners about the importance of reading skills. I expect that I successfully complete my research and I also hope that my research findings will help both the teachers and learners.

Rationale & Significance of the Study

With the changing educational scenario of English learning has also changed. English has now become indispensible. English, though a second language in most of the countries has become the medium of education. Knowledge of English can now easily help anyone to have an edge over others. It is the only medium of instruction for higher studies. Most of the books on any subject are now available only in English Knowledge of English, is thus not only essential, but mandatory (to be precise) for taking higher education Language.

This change in the medium of instruction has brought about a change in the methodology of teaching English. Translation methods, lectures on the theories, rules etc have come to an end now a days. We stress student-centered learning. More emphasis is put on activity so that the learners are able to properly transfer their knowledge into practice. The teaching aim is to make them more competent in handling any kind of situation, face any challenge and, to use their knowledge of English in practical situations, Teaching, now is not just instructing, it is to train the students into become successful in every sphere of life. For that we need to change the whole approach of teaching a second language.

These changes have created problems for the students who use mother tongue as their medium of instruction. University education becomes a difficult task for them as they most of the time don't understand instructions given in English. To add to their agony, the books become a terror to them as they, being competent only in mother tongue are not able to understand the long technical terms that they find in these books. If we take science, commerce or other technical education this deficiency in knowledge of English language becomes all the more painful as these subjects can only be studied satisfactorily if the student thoroughly reads the text books. The same is true about studying literature. Unless the student reads the text book, the knowledge of the language remains only half.

The reason behind this state of education is reluctance on the part of the learners to read. They are not made aware of the importance of language skills like reading, writing, speaking & listening. All four are important, but reading and writing hold a place of their own. They are of great importance in the recent examination system.

The question papers contain unseen passages which students need to solve in a very short period of time. If they are not properly trained to read fast and comprehended they won't be able to solve the question paper on time. So the students should be properly trained in reading skill.

The same is true of international students learning English. Like for Indian students, English is a foreign language for the students coming to India to seek higher education. Most of these students know the language of their own country and are totally confused when it comes to university education. These students should also be properly guided in mastering the language skills. For them, again reading is an important skill, and they should be properly trained in mastering this skill along with the other skills.

A lot of practice, is therefore, necessary both for both Indian and international students. It is duty on part of the teachers to encourage students to read not only textual, but non-textual materials also. Here I must mention that non textual material can open up influx of knowledge for any student be it Indian or international student. Classroom teaching is

not enough to master a language. After the class reading is necessary. This goal can be achieved by encouraging students to read textual as well non-textual material. This is an era of practical knowledge. Classroom reading or teaching can never fulfill this need. Extensive reading of variety of materials like newspaper, magazines, novels, and fictions can bring you to a treasure island. You are amazed at the dazzling gems of knowledge. You crave for more and you get more. It is like an expedition into an unknown world. The deeper you go, the more you know, and the more you crave for.

Aims and objective of the study

From my school days I've noticed an utter reluctance on the part of the students to read English text books. They are more interested in reading notes, rather than text books outside their classroom. The teacher constantly advises the students to read stories, poems and also grammar books. She insists on reading the text first and then attending her lecture. This makes teaching and understanding easier for teacher and the students respectively. But her advice always falls on deaf ear. Now a day the same tradition continues. Students still run away from reading text and concentrate more on ready-made notes that are available in the market. It creates a synthetic knowledge in them. Moreover they don't learn on their own. They don't use their creative ability to prepare question answers themselves. They deprive themselves of the vast knowledge that they can gain while reading the text books. This dependence on readymade materials continues even when they take admission in college. The habit to read text books grows weaker day-by-day and students concentrate more on private tuition where they get

readymade questions and answers. The same is true of university education. The most catastrophic result is that they are not able to transfer their knowledge into professional world where you need to read and comprehend and write a lot of materials. For example one needs to understand an email and also answer it. One wrong word can affect the person's as well as the company's reputation. There are numerous such instances where one needs a variety of reading and writing skills. My objective is to prove that reading has an effect on the writing ability of a person. Therefore, I want to demonstrate the significance of reading skills in developing writing skills of Arabic speaking students.

A) Text books

No one can deny the miracle that reading of English text books can work. Reading the can be fun. It is not just textbooks it is the unfathomable sea, the deeper you delve, the more you discover the precious gems that are in store for you. Your power of reasoning develops. Your vocabulary becomes richer, your knowledge expands. Read the book not as part of syllabus, but as a source of knowledge, as a fiction, or as a drama. Reading poems can give you immense joy if you take it as a thing of beauty. Imagine how many words, phrases, similes, metaphors you can learn when you read just one poem. Read the poem aloud, discover the beauty.

B) Non-Textual Material (Newspaper)

First, let us talk about newspaper. We all know that newspaper is an important medium of communication. It contains news related to sports, politics, accidents, culture, religion and a variety of other things. It contains news related to day to day problems. Newspaper can create awareness among people, regarding an issue. It is the best medium to express our views on a controversial issue. Newspaper helps the learner to get a variety of knowledge and gain an influx of experience. He can then apply this knowledge to his day to day life.

Newspaper contains realistic news. In this way we can create a link between life and education. Can you imagine what awareness you can create in a student about the society and its problems? So when he grows up, he has every quality to be a good citizen. He is not a silent sufferer. He has a voice of his own. He has the power to make that voice heard by every other citizen of a country. Even he has the voice to raise when it comes to the humanitarinian issues of other countries. Thus he becomes a global citizen.

Reading the newspaper is of greater importance for international students learning English. As a faculty at ELTIS I have observed that these students have a very poor ability to read. These students can think creatively, but they are unable to give shape to

their ideas. It has its effect on the other language skills also. Reading can do wonders to them. Reading textbooks as well as non-textual material can help them to acquire vocabulary, knowledge of sentence structures, syntax and much more. We, the teachers can give them practice in using dictionary while reading so that they learn the difficult words along with learning vocabulary. The students should be encouraged to make sentences with the words they have learnt so that they can make practical use of what they have learnt. And how to encourage the students to read? We can add variety of interesting activities with lots of speaking and reading activities. They should be encouraged to read an article aloud in the class so that they gain confidence and learn pronunciation along with it. Newspaper in an international classroom can prove to be really beneficial as lots of interesting activities can be planned as mentioned earlier. In this way our purpose to groom them as global citizen is also solved.

C) Magazines

Magazines are often interesting. Their contents are longer than that of the newspaper. They often make in-depth analysis of any topic and our journalists have every quality to make a magazine topic interesting. As a teacher of English for international students I often recommend reading it film magazines or sports or even fashion magazines. Start

with small news items then the bigger ones. Read everything in a magazine - even the advertisements. You don't know what treasure you can acquire by reading them. Moreover, some diversion is always required. Going through text books, newspapers can sometimes prove to be monotonous. Reading magazines can prove to be most entertaining and at the same time they can fill your brain with lots of new ideas, words and topics which may encourage you to stop and think.

D) Popular and Simple literatures.

These books should be carefully selected and may contain both fiction and nonfiction. We can recommend the young learners to read science fictions, detective stories ' Mills and Boons' Huckleberry Finn, Famous Five etc series which are again very interesting and the learners and learn a lot from them.

Now what type of Reading can be suggested to the Second language learner?

"There is no mystery to efficient reading it is a skill that you can learn".

a) **Loud reading**: It is very important to learn pronunciation. You can really enjoy the beauty of words, rhythm when you read poetry aloud. Loud reading is nothing but vocalization of written words. It improves one's speed reading. In loud reading sometimes only one person is active. So the ultimate purpose of teaching reading skill is to help the learner read the text silently. Loud reading is quite helpful for basic level students. It is most essential for learning pronunciation. Moreover it is the way by which we can motivate to learn. It is the beginning extensive reading and is recommended at the advanced level.

b) **Silent reading:** Silent reading is specially recommended for reading fictions, stories, magazines, newspapers etc. Learners learn how to read fast and comprehend. It is the direct confrontation between texts and the reader. It is very important for international level.

c) **Extensive reading:** Extensive reading, simply speaking is to read rapidly and mundanely. *Jeave Chall* Writes *every study of reading achievement points to the importance of vocabulary knowledge. Nagy and Herman* state it *Children who know more understand the text better.* Extensive reading aims at enhancing reading speed. *Day and Bamford* in their book *Extensive Reading* emphasize on this aspect of reading as a language developer.

Scope of the Study

Reading skill is an area which is very vast. The reason why I want to do research in this skill is that reading is an important aspect of learning, that reading is one of the most important language skills, and that it can affect other skills as well. But the students whether at the school, college or university level don't realize this aspect and they run away from reading. I've observed the same about international students. There are linguistic limitations on their part. Moreover they don't realize the vast treasure that English language has in store for them. No language can be mastered in a limited period of time. We need to nurture a habit of reading so that our learning of second language continues lifelong. So this would be my area of research.

Research Methodology

Working station: ELTIS

It is a well known institute for teaching English language to Indians as well as foreign students. It is a reputed institution where we get students from 25 countries across the globe. So there is a very vast scope for research.

As my *target group is the Arabic speaking students*, to identify the students with whom I want to do my research, a *proficiency test* will be conducted. A passage will be given to them. At the most we can select such passage which includes some vocabulary that suits the Pre-intermediate level of proficiency. Simple questions can be asked to judge their comprehension levels. They can also be given some writing activities based on the passage This test will help us to have an idea of their levels and at the same time we can choose our samples.

My aim is enhance the two important skills (reading and writing) of the international students. So a time period of one year can be taken. There will be a target which the students will have to acquire during this period. This one year will be *quarterly evaluation along with the regular assessment in between***.**

During this period they will be given regular practice in various types of reading, in the use of dictionary, in the skills of guessing meanings of uncommon words, and also in the process of finding answers to the questions on a passage or story. Students would also be exposed to various writing activities.

Books, other than the text material chosen for various levels should be readily available. At the same time it is important to keep record of whether they are involving themselves in after-the-class reading or not. Various methods can be applied to find out their reading progress. *The teacher can start a discussion* on a book and students can be asked to continue the discussion. The discussion can be on setting, on characters, on complications etc. students can be asked to *keep their own notebooks* in which they write the names of the books and other materials which they have read. *Pre-printed*

forms can be used which the students fill up, noting down what they read and how long. It is very important to assess whether there is any effect on their writing or not. *A book report is* another method where the students write a brief summary of the books or reading materials. This, in my opinion, is the most effective method of keeping record of their progress. But this can be implemented only at a later stage. In the initial stage it is convenient to give some simple writing activities.

My ultimate aim is to enhance reading and writing skills of international students who have very little exposure to English during their school and college days. As they acquire more and more accuracy in all the proposed skills and more and more success in comprehension, they will be interested in more materials available in the market or library since success gives you motivation. So my research will have far reaching impact in the sense that it will change the attitude of international students towards English language. It will help them to overcome the fear associated with the use of this language and to gain more confidence in acquiring three important skills of English language. They will understand the importance of reading skill and their training of this language will go on throughout their lives. Finally they will discover the vast treasure of the English language.

Chapter Scheme

Chapter One: Introduction

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

Chapter four: Reading Skills

Chapter Five: Problems in Reading Skills

Chapter Six: Data Analysis

Chapter Seven: Conclusions

Bibliography:

1. *Field, John. Listening in the Language Classroom. New Delhi:CUP 2010. Print.*

2. *Flower, Dew, John Miller and Lindsey. Second Language Listening. Cambridge: CUP***,** *2005 Print.*

3. *Giltrow, Janet. Academic Writing, Canada: Broadview Press,1990 Print.*

4. *Hamp-Lyons. Study Writing, Cambridge: CUP, 2006 Print.*

5. *Hyland, Ken. Second Language Writing***.** *Cambridge: CUP***,** *2003 Print.*

6*. Grellet, François. Developing Reading Skills. Cambridge: CUP, 1981 Print.*

7. *Day and Bamford. Extensive Reading in the Second Language Classroom. Cambridge: CUP, 1998 Print.*

8. *Nuttal, Christine. Teaching Reading Skill In a Foreign Language. Oxford: McMillan Publishers, 1982 Print.*

9*. Pugh, Silent Reading. London: Educational Books,1978 Print.*

10. *Pakenham. Making connections***,** *Cambridge: CUP 1998 Print.*

11. *Richards and Rodgers. Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching. U.K:CUP, 1986 Print.*

12. *Warwick ,Young, Clemenston, Cunningham. Face to Face* **,** *Cambridge: CUP* **,***2006 Print.*

13. *Seliger, Herbert and Shohamy. Second Language Research Methods*. *Cambridge: CUP* **,***1989 Print***.**

14. *Alderson, Charles. Assessing Reading. Oxford: Oxford University Press , 2000. Print.*

Jaya Sidhanta	**Dr. Z. N. Patil**
Research Scholar	**Research Supervisor**